THE STORY OF THE 12 TRIBES OF LEMMING ISLAND

Written by Richard Biltcliffe
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'...and so, they returned to their Island home. The wounded were healed and the story of the selfless sacrifice of the many for the few was hewn in stone.....for the Talisman reigned on high in the hearts of the multitude and the nation drew peace from its power.'

'...and with the breaking of the Talisman, the 12 Tribes grew and prospered, yet each in a different direction, each into their own nation with a piece of The One which ruled them all...'

Extracts from the ancient and unbelievably hard-going 'Book of Days'

by Lemmas the unhinged

circa 3000 BO (Before Oblivion)

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THE STORY OF

THE 12 TRIBES OF LEMMING ISLAND

EMMING ISLAND lay green and peaceful. A beaming sun floated across a deep blue sky that danced to the flight of butterflies. Swooping birds jostled each other in merry flight and playful bees spent the afternoon happily stinging jolly picnickers who danced and frolicked by the river.

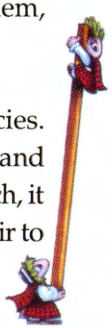
All in all, everything was going pretty well for Lemming Island. Each tribe was happy and contentment spread across the land like a dropped ice - cream at Disneyland.

Yet some tribes were more contented than others...

Chapter 1

The Prophecies

TO SAY THAT the Highland tribe were a little concerned would be an understatement of immense magnitude. It would be a Moby Dick of an understatement. A Michael Jackson's nose of a falsification. You see it was the Highlanders who were charged with a very great duty and it was a responsibility that, at the time we join them, weighed heavily upon their shoulders...



For they were the keepers of the prophecies. They were the sole watchers on Lemming Island for the signs of The Darkness - a darkness which, it was prophesied, would bring doom and despair to all the Lemmings.

The day the first sign came, it burst upon the Island like a wave of fear. A blood red sun skimmed the horizon and shed a cold, red light upon the startled faces that looked on. The Highland Lemmings trembled at the sight, for they knew the sign. Other tribes were frightened, for they knew not what it was, just that it was a foreboding of evil. Only the Circus tribe carried on as normal. They just threw custard pies at it and called it Bob.

But the Highlanders knew that it was the beginning of the end and began their preparations.

A Meeting of the Chiefs was called where it was decided that a single Lemming - chosen for his strength and stature from all the young Lemmings - would be chosen as a messenger. He would travel the island in search of the other tribes and enlighten them as to the ancient prophecies and tell them of The Way. For it was written, as it all too often was, that the tribes would build a huge vessel which, by the power of the complete Talisman, would allow all the Lemmings from all the tribes to escape to safety.

What the messenger had to do was to spread the news and prepare for the evacuation of all the tribes. Firstly, they must send all their carpenters to help build the vessel and select at least one of their number to bring their piece of the one Talisman to join the rest. For so it was written (yes again!!) in the days of old by the legendary Lemming bard known as J.R.R. Tolemming:

One Lemming to tell them all,
One Lemming to find them,
One Lemming to bring them all
And in The Darkness mind them,
In the Land of Lemmings when
The shadows lie.

Chapter 2

Grand Chief Lemming McLemming

ND SO WE JOIN them....The Grand Chief Lemming McLemming puffed on his pipe and cast a thoughtful look at the Young Lemming before him.

'You have been chosen,' he said at last, 'from all the Lemmings in the tribe for this most important and hazardous endeavour. It has been but one short year since the Watchers from the hills came screaming into the village with news of the first sign. That was the day the sun failed and Dawn crept from door to door in darkness...'

Jimmy McLemming made a scribbled note in a little notebook, placing three stars next to one particular entry.

The Clan chief reached towards a golden casket which glittered in the fire light. The young Lemming stared into the gently flickering flames and watched them lick hungrily around a maple log. He sniggered quietly as they formed a rather rude shape.

'Now pay attention,' said the Chief gruffly. 'For so 'twas written about our actions in these dark times...' He cleared his throat before he began to read - and when he did begin, his strong accent and deep

gravelly voice filled the young Lemming with awe.

'For when the sun is pale and the light begins to fail, so too will the light of the Lemming. Storypipes shall no longer puff by the hearth and the sound of laughter will be rare amongst the Twelve. Yet hope may be found where you least expect it. Look through the veil of glass and salvation may be found.'

'What can it mean?' asked the youngster.

'We know not,' replied the Grand Chief. 'The elders have puzzled over that for many years yet the meaning of the veil of glass has remained a mystery from us.'

'Veil of glass?' questioned Jimmy.

'I was talking about salivation. How can that help us? We need *real* help not drool and dribble.'

The old man sighed and shook his head. He thought of the coming doom and then of the carefully laid plans he and his ancestors had painstakingly deliberated upon over the centuries. He then looked at the inanely smiling Lemming who stood before him.

The Chief sighed again. 'Are you sure you're

the one we picked for this job?' he said.

The young Lemming nodded enthusiastically. 'Everyone else was at the Highland Games, I was the only one around at the time.'

'The job of passing the most important news ever throughout all the tribes of Lemming Island and we've chosen you. You're the best we could do???'

'Thank you very much,' chirped the youngster...

Chapter 3

Circus World

IMMY McLEMMING left the Highlands to a great clamour. Well-wishers lined the streets and sent him on his way with a tear in his eye. He left his homeland with deep regret.

His path took him southwards at first and then steered him straight towards the great peak of Lem Nevis, the highest peak in the Highlands. It took him several hours to scale the mountain and when he did, he saw the tiny speck that was his home town sparkling like a sparkly shiny thing in the valley below. He looked southwards and saw the bright lands of Circus World.

He entered Circus World with the eager intention of passing on the news quickly and efficiently in order to get on to the other lands.

'The first person I see I'll give the news and they can pass it on to the others,' he thought. He walked on a little way and, after a short while came across an old clown Lemming, steadily shuffling along the road.

'Hello there!' piped Jimmy.

The old Lemming turned around and looked at

him questioningly. The young Lemming stopped and rocked slightly on his heels.

'This...' he thought, sizing up the figure of the frail old Lemming '...is going to be a shock. I'd better put it lightly.'

He pondered about how to deliver his shocking news for a little while and then hit the old Lemming with it. Or rather, the old Lemming hit Jimmy with it. Because before Jimmy could utter a single syllable, the old Lemming lined up a particularly wobbly custard pie and planted it squarely in Jimmy's face. Jimmy wiped off the cream in somewhat of a shocked manner and spluttered.

'Just wait a minute!' he said, demanding to be heard and not to be attacked with any more runny confectionery.

'I've got something very important to tell...' SPLAT!! He wiped his face again.

'Look,' he demanded. 'I've come from the Highland tribe to tell you of the coming darkness...' He ducked as the old clown threw a bucket of confetti at him.

'STOP!!' he cried. He was almost coming to the

end of his patience now.

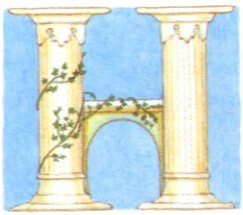
The old Lemming stopped in his tracks. Jimmy watched him. He began to do a little dancing mime and then gestured to Jimmy to come closer as he couldn't hear what he was saying. Jimmy sighed and watched him with suspicion. Was this another of the Lemming's tiresome tricks? The old clown gestured that he was finished playing pranks and could he come closer as he was a little deaf.

Jimmy at last relented and bent down towards the old Lemming's ear. He moved a thick mop of green hair and began to tell of the prophecies. The old Lemming smiled at him and squirted him with a trick flower. He pushed a pinch of itching powder down Jimmy's back and hobbled away down the road.

To cut a long story short, Jimmy eventually made his way into Circus Town and, after being comprehensively soaked in custard, dragged up a high wire by the SuperLemming and ferried around in cars with square wheels that blew up before they managed to make it anywhere, Jimmy managed to get his story across. He left Circus Land with immense relief and a goldfish bowl jammed on his head.

Chapter 4

Classical World

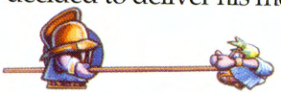


E ENTERED the Classical World with vigour and determination. Ruins spread across the land with sprawling columns and collapsed buildings everywhere. Here and there, rivers of lava crossed his path, flowing eagerly towards the sea; which was strange because when it got there, it got a really cool reception and a very hard time because the sea would just let off a lot of steam.

Following a cacophony of harp music and laughter, he found the elders of the Classic tribe in the middle of a toga party. Jimmy peered through an archway to see what was going on.

Three portly Lemmings reclined upon long sofas, each surrounded by a handful of attendants. A large arena spanned before them which was filled with a hundred Lemmings and a scene so full of complete and utter mayhem that every Classic Lemming felt entirely at home. Lemmings climbed up buildings and tunnelled through floors. They jumped off roofs and hacked at walls. In fact they partook in just about every kind of destructive and rowdy behaviour that was so close to every Classic Lemming's heart. Unfortunately, Jimmy wasn't a Classic Lemming.

'Charming chaps,' thought Jimmy sarcastically. The Lemmings of old were really unsophisticated to the modern Lemming's eye and the years of 'civilisation' since had altered their behaviour beyond recognition. They did awful things to each other and took pleasure from the most barbaric of acts. Jimmy decided to deliver his message quickly and leave.



It turned out that the Classic Lemmings thought the Darkness a really good idea; the Classic Lemming idea of a good time was very, very strange. Nevertheless, they did agree to help and deliver their piece of Talisman in order to help the others so long as they would be allowed to jump off the ark whenever they felt the urge. They added, when he asked if they could help build the ark, that their carpenters were otherwise tied up. Jimmy wondered what they meant but knowing the Classic Lemmings' indifference to Lemming life, he thought it as well not to ask

Chapter 5

Mediæval World

EDIÆVAL WORLD is next,' he thought, as he entered Mediæval World. 'This should be a breeze,' he thought again - this time wrongly.

The sound of sweet music led him into a clearing. Ten warrior Lemmings stood surrounding a Lute player. The warriors were dancing in perfect syncopation, and didn't take a blind bit of notice of Jimmy. Their little legs hopped and skipped and they span and jigged in time with each other, not a step out of line. After a short while, the Lutist drew his refrain to a close, and with that, the warriors stopped their dancing and looked around, it has to be said, looking a little befuddled. After a moment of head-clearing, they noticed a small tartan-clad Lemming stood close by with his mouth wide open in surprise. They looked at each other, picked up their spears and closed in on Jimmy.

Jimmy was worried by this. He let them know he was worried by pulling a long face and letting out a little whimper.

Clickoooo hmmmmmmmmmmmmm. The sound of a Gibson Les Paul being plugged in to a Marshall 400watt stack with its volume control on

'11' spread throughout the forest. The warriors stopped in their tracks. Power chords echoed from bough to bough as the former lute player knelt down to one knee and thrashed out the chorus to Rock 'n' Roll, flourishing it with neat hammer-ons and trick blues breaks.

The sound was music to Jimmy's ears, despite the fact that he'd always felt that Led Zeppelin should have stuck to their blues roots. The reason Jimmy was so pleased to hear the music was that the warriors all stopped stomping towards him immediately and began a steady triple-time scank, on the spot. The young Lemming ran away at full speed, barely stopping until he had reached the town and delivered his message.

Chapter 6

Outdoor World

OUTDOOR WORLD CAME and went in a swirl of hikes, discussions on the plight of the lesser-squashed Dung Beetle and morris dances on village greens. Jimmy was directed towards the leader, or democratically elected chairperson, who was busy abseiling down a rock face. Jimmy joined him midway after being manhandled into a harness and bundled off the cliff. He found the chairperson lazily puffing on a stubby pipe whilst dangling over a precipice, apparently unconcerned by the fact that he was 500 feet in the air. Jimmy wasn't unconcerned and clung on to the rope with white knuckles.

After a moment of acclimatisation to his new surroundings, Jimmy told him of the threat to Lemming Island and of the prophecies. The chairperson was visibly disturbed. His little goatee beard rustled and his pale complexion flushed.

'What'll happen to the Dung Beetle and what about our coming garden fête? This is appalling, we were counting on a sunny day for a good turnout and we didn't anticipate a darkness at all - we haven't even ordered any candles!'

He paused and nodded an enthusiastic nod.

'Of course we'll help you build your vessel, this is a dreadful situation. Our women's group can make all the wicker laundry baskets and I personally will oversee the bingo every Wednesday night.'

'What about your section of the Talisman?' enquired Jimmy.

'Hmmm,' thought the chairperson Lemming. 'I think I know where it is. Didn't we turn it into a nice coffee table last summer? No, that was Mrs Planterlemming's Plum pudding...'

Jimmy slid down the rope, leaving the bobble-hatted Lemming behind muttering to himself, and headed towards the land of the Egyptians.

Chapter 7

EGYPTIAN WORLD

HE SUN WAS BEATING down hard now as Jimmy McLemming staggered across his forty-seventh sand dune of the day. He'd tried, unsuccessfully, to catch a camelemming to ride and now trudged despondently onwards under the baking sun.

An hour passed before he sighted something on the horizon. The shape grew as he walked towards it and after a while he made the shape out as some kind of aircraft. It was a fighter aircraft of some sort with, yes, bombs attached. Then he stopped, recognising the type, and walked away from it. It was just a Mirage.

At last, several more dunes later, he came to a city. At first he threw stones at it to make sure it was real and decided it was when it started throwing them back. Rising spires pierced the skies and from them, carried on the gentle breeze, came distant voices singing out in praise. He was ushered in by guards at the city wall and found himself in front of the great queen CleoLemming herself. She rose from her bath of Asses milk and made Jimmy blush from head to toe.

'I hear you have a message for my people, young

Lemming,' she said. 'Pray, rest your weary feet and tell your news.'

Jimmy was overawed. In the highlands, all the girl Lemmings wore thick duffle coats and Wellington boots against the cold. And here was a Lemming of great beauty - a QUEEN Lemming of great beauty - sat glistening before him clad only in a loin cloth and bikini which couldn't have contained enough cotton between them to make even the skimpiest string vest. Her pale skin glimmered softly in the dampled light that fell through the open windows. Her hair was swept back showing her true royal beauty without shame. Jimmy began to speak.

'Nng bluu pffft wuuuuuu...!' he said.

He felt like his tongue was about 10 feet wide and covered in fur. He tried again.

'Waaa bluuuuu flabbber ng...' Jimmy's embarrassment was plain for all to see. The parts of his brain that controlled such feelings reeled under the pressure and decided enough was enough. They had a brief discussion with his legs and decided for emergency action. Jimmy's body stood up and hurled itself into the bath.

He emerged reasonably coherent and spluttered his message at the queen. Unfortunately, he also

spluttered half a pint of milk at her and was unceremoniously escorted from the palace. He did however, get his message across and was satisfied that it was a job well done.

Jimmy had really LOW standards.

Chapter 8

BeachBum World

EACH BUM WORLD. 'Party-time!' thought Jimmy as he pulled on his Hawaiian shirt and Jams (that's Bermudas to you and me!) Rock music and laughter rolled towards him like a wave and Jimmy found himself becoming excited.

'Excell-ent!' he said to a passing Lemmbabe who smiled provocatively in his direction. He pulled on his shades and tugged up his collar in an attempt at looking cool - which, if it wasn't for his dopey care-free expression which had at last found its natural place in life, would have almost entirely failed. He lolled across the beach, his weedy legs making him stand out like a worm on a dinner plate and getting similarly disdainful looks off the babes.

Nevertheless and undeterred, Jimmy decided to merge into the background so as not to arouse undue attention. In order to do this he began to imitate the relaxed walk of the other Lemmings. The secret, he decided, was to look as though he was just about to fall onto a sofa but step before he toppled over. He tried and was satisfied he fitted in with the Beach Bum crowd like a natural. What he actually looked like was more akin to a flamingo on roller skates than a real Doood but Jimmy was perfectly satisfied in his ignorance.

A Lemming with a boom box lolled past. His music, all bass line and drum beat, thundered into Jimmy's ears. He watched him go past, not noticing the beautifully constructed sand castle mere inches infront of his foot. He fell onto the castle with a level of grace usually reserved for all-out mud wrestlers. The sand castle was flattened and the air filled with cries from dismayed kid Lemmings. Jimmy adopted his usual crisis tactic and ran away.

He ran all the way to the giant sand castle that was the home of the Chief Beach Bum and delivered the news with reverence to the Chief; adopting a suitably sombre and gloomy tone of voice. Yet, although he acted quite properly, he didn't feel quite right about delivering such a staggering piece of news to the character that relaxed before him. The chief was reclined on a luminous yellow surfboard and was being attended by several bikini-clad BabeLemmings - each draping various appendages over the Chief who was watching a ball game on a wide-screen TV. Jimmy felt like Neil Armstrong would have done if, when he reached the moon, discovered it was made of cardboard and sticky tape. It was a bit of a let down.

Nevertheless, the message was delivered and he continued his journey.

Chapter 9

Sports World

PORTS WORLD CAME and went in a blur of Joggers, Jumpers and Gliders. He found the Chief, or Chiefess, as it turned out to be, at the main event of the year - the Olempic Games. Jimmy arrived at the stadium to find that the Chiefess was in the final of the 100m relay and that all the tickets were sold out. He looked around in exasperation, wondering how he was to get in when he spied some cheerleaders' pom-poms. Before he knew what he was doing, he was in a line of cheerleaders being shown onto the field inside the stadium and being cast suspicious glances by the other dancers on account of his hairy legs.

Jimmy started to panic. All the other dancers began assembling in a dance formation and Jimmy remembered that the last time he'd danced he'd trampled on his Aunt Mary's toes so often she'd had to seek medical advice for flat feet.

The cheerleaders began cheering and Jimmy slunk off in search of the Chiefess who, it was announced over the public address system, was just about to start the 100m relay. He danced across to the starting blocks just as the gun went and began madly charging after the athletes who were by now rounding the bend at the top of the first straight.

Jimmy tore off behind them, pom-poms flapping crazily and legs bending under the strain as they careered down the back straight and rounded the final bend. He crossed the finishing line on his hands and knees and gasping for breath.

A lady carrying a clip board and wearing a tiara came across to help him. 'Hey, like the running outfit,' she said. 'You've got real taste.'

Jimmy pointed at her tiara. 'Why are you wearing that?' he panted.

'Because I'm the Chief,' she replied.

'Then why aren't you in the race?' he asked, bemused.

'I was just starting it, not running in it.' The Chiefess said. Jimmy let out a heavy sigh. He'd just run the fastest - or at least the most bizarre -100m relay ever run for no reason at all. And he'd run all the legs himself. He sighed again.

He told the Chiefess his message the next day, after a brief period of resuscitation and several cold showers. He went on his way promising never to speak to a Lemming in a headband ever again.

Chapter 10

Shadow World

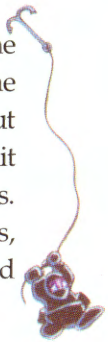
IMMY ENTERED Shadow World with a sense of mounting fear. Heavy clouds billowed in the sky and sheets of drizzle hung in the air. Lightning flickered in the distance and crashed to the ground. Jimmy trudged onwards.

Eventually, he spied a dark figure standing before him in the middle of the road. Jimmy faltered.

'Hello,' he said in a frail and hollow voice. The man stood, silently.

'Hello,' he said again. 'My name's ...' he hesitated. He felt a sudden compulsion to keep his identity to himself.

'Your name is James T. McLemming,' stated the shadowy figure in a hard no-nonsense voice. The figure closed in on Jimmy who could now make out features in the dark. He wore a black one-piece suit and hood with matching lace-up commando boots. If he wanted to make an impression of toughness, then Jimmy thought he was doing a pretty good job.



The Lemming shined a flash light into Jimmy's face, handed him a note and then disappeared into

the bushes. Jimmy opened the note and read it. It read:

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To J.T.Mc.Lemming

The Parking Lot stop as soon as possible
stop don't stop stop

Mr. X
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Jimmy looked around. A coloured flashing light lit up some distance ahead and he walked towards it. After a few minutes it appeared that it was a huge flashing neon sign. After a few more minutes he read the words: 'Top Secret Underground Parking Lot. Shadow Lemmings only.' He found an elevator and selected Level 007 from the control panel.

The elevator door slid open with a hefty 'Clunk' and Jimmy stepped out into a damp parking lot void of cars. He looked around and walked towards the centre, his feet making a curious clicking noise as he trod. He reached the middle just as a beam of strong light picked him out and he stood, dazzled, in the headlights of a long black limo. A door slammed shut. Jimmy covered his eyes and felt hands frisking him.

'He's clean,' a voice said.

'Clean?' said Jimmy. 'I'm filthy, wet and cold. What are you talking about?'

'Silence!' said another voice. 'I believe you have some information.'

'Yes,' replied Jimmy.
'Well.' Said the voice.
'Well what?'
'Well, talk'
'What about??'

'About whatever it is you have to tell us.' The voice was becoming techy. Jimmy thought about this.

'No.'
'What do you mean no?'
'The opposite to yes.'
'Why not?'

'Why not!?? Because you're a bunch of ignorant louts who go around dazzling people and commenting on their hygiene, that's why!'

Silence followed, and then more silence came. A dripping noise dripped but went unnoticed because

it was four stories up. After the silence, the voice began again.

'Oh go on.'
'No!'
'Please.'
'No!' He thought a moment.
'Pretty Please.'
The voice sighed. 'Pretty Please.'
'Pretty Please with sugar on.'
'Pretty please with sugar on.'
'Pretty please with sugar and currants on.'
'Look are you going to tell us or not???'
'Alright then...'

And with that, Jimmy explained to them about the darkness and the vessel and the need for the complete Talisman. He wasn't sure how well it was received because when he finished his story, he was bundled into the boot of the car and dumped over the border in Cave World.

Chapter 11

Cave World

AVE WORLD, it turned out, was easy. Jimmy was making his way across a thin bridge over a lava stream when a huge leathery bird swept him from his feet and dropped him into a nest, high on a mountain peak. This would have been most unfortunate had it not been for the fact that half the tribe of Cave Lemmings was there as well.

He conveyed his message using a combination of sign language, nodding grunts and pictures drawn on the wall of a cliff - although he had to admit a little dismay when the message was greeted with enthusiastic nods and cheers.

He left the ledge when a particularly friendly Cave Lemming whacked him with a club and knocked him out of the nest - apparently in a gesture of affection. He landed on a bed of moss, ten feet thick and, after a period of disorientation where he thought he was upside-down and tried to walk up a tree, he was unharmed.

Chapter 12

Space World

HE NEXT DAY found the young Lemming bounding across a lunar landscape. After a short while, he spied what appeared to be a flat board with a seat on it and a control panel with handle bars sticking out of it. The control panel read XR3i turbo Hover Board MkIV. Jimmy was intrigued and his intrigue got the better of him.

He stood on the board and followed the instructions. Step 1- Insert key. Step 2- Pull out choke. Step 3- Press starter. Even Jimmy could follow these instructions and the hoverboard hummed quietly beneath his feet. Jimmy smiled to himself, nestled comfortably on the seat, twisted the twist grip and the board slid out neatly from beneath him; the dangling safety belt wrapping around his foot as it went.

The course Jimmy followed was largely dictated by the hoverboard. Although he found he could alter the course slightly by shifting his weight from side to side, he didn't really think this was the way to use the hoverboard - from about three feet behind holding on by one foot.

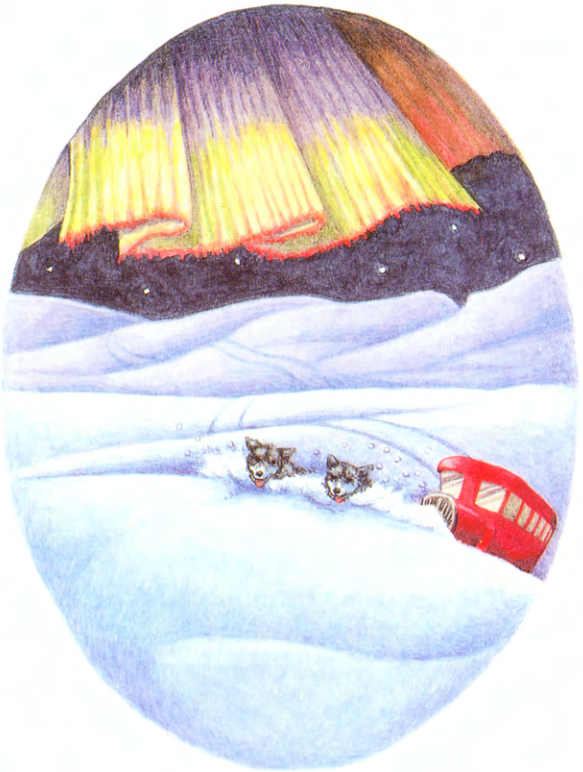
He was saved, after an hour or two of zooming around space like a deflating balloon, by a house.

The house saved him by standing in the way. He rammed the house at great speed, imbedding the hoverboard into the wall and sending himself sprawling. After that, the Lemming that appeared didn't seem too interested in the bad news that Jimmy had to tell and was more interested in telling Jimmy about his own, vis-à-vis the embedded hoverboard and damaged wall. He was also more interested in hitting Jimmy around the head with a piece of moon rock and when he returned to his house muttering something about Laserblasters, Jimmy decided to find another Lemming to enlighten with his news.

This accomplished, he quickly moved onto the final tribe, the Polar Tribe, now feeling a little happier, and much closer to the end of his quest.

Chapter 13

Polar World



E ENTERED the minus 30 degrees temperature feeling a mite underdressed, being still attired in Hawaiian shirt and jams, and decided to find some more suitable gear.

The first Polar Lemming he found seemed willing to trade and Jimmy left with a warm fur coat and a pair of skis. Feeling much more snug, he now decided to investigate his new surroundings and found a sign pointing away into whiteness which read:

Polar City
Distance - Much too far

Jimmy puffed into his cold hands and reeled slightly at the thought of the long trek ahead. But just as he was about to begin his journey, he heard a faint cry of dogs in the distance and stopped to look around. The noise grew louder and louder until around a small snowy outcrop not far to Jimmy's right appeared a little red bus with a pack of baying huskies tugging it along.

A minute later the bus drew up to a halt near Jimmy. He looked up at the driver who shouted, almost as if to a cue;

'All aboard who's going aboard. Next stop Polar City:- Freezer Centre, Icicle Works, Santa's Grotto and Chieftain's Palace.'

'Now that's a stroke of luck,' thought Jimmy. He squeezed himself onto the bus and took a seat next to an old Polar Bear with chronic halitosis. A little Lemming sat in front was turning a fetching shade of green.

Two hours later, Jimmy clambered off the bus. He had a numb bottom and pins and needles in his left leg which he got rid of by stamping around furiously. That done, he decided he had to find the Chief quickly before the Polar Bear decided to ask him directions and turned him green too.

He entered the courtyard of the Chieftain's Palace through a small doorway and looked around. Several doors led from the courtyard into the palace but one in particular caught Jimmy's eye. This was an altogether more grand doorway which had the words 'Throne Room' emblazoned on it in golden letters.

At least that was what it said. But when the young Lemming gave a terse push on the door, Jimmy found that the Throne Room was in fact the bathroom, complete with gold-plated toilet, toilet-

roll holder and rubber duck. He cautiously stepped inside and was greeted by a deep gurgling noise which appeared to be a fairly fluent rendition of the chorus from 'Singing in the Rain' performed entirely by gargle. Jimmy was much impressed.

After a short while spent listening to what turned out to be the Chieftain of Polar World, Jimmy decided it was time to announce his presence and so, with a hand to his mouth, he 'hurrumphed' rather loudly and broke the king mid-chorus.

'What's all this then?' spluttered the king. 'A young Lemming spying on me kingly bathliness. Begone before I chop off yer appendages and have yer horse-whipped about the ice caps.'

Jimmy trembled, he didn't know where his ice caps were or if he had any but didn't like the prospect at having them horse-whipped. He trembled some more and felt all dizzy. But deep from within, a little voice popped out and addressed the King.

'I'm so sorry,' it said. 'But I've got a rather important message to deliver which can't really wait.'

'Whaat!' boomed the king. 'Can't wait for a king

to have his bath?'

He sloshed around in his bath sending plumes of steam billowing into the air as the king reached boiling point. But before the king could continue, Jimmy's voice did and told the king of all the terrible news it knew, it even embellished the Darkness with eruptions and earthquakes but Jimmy thought the king probably deserved these anyway and so was happy to see him squirm.

The king was obviously distressed at the news and threw a heavy water-laden loofah at Jimmy to prove it. Jimmy left rather quickly via a convenient window, hijacked a discarded skidoo and made his way across the frozen lands back to the glens and burns of the Highlands feeling terribly relieved that his task was now completed.

Chapter 14

Home Again

HE HIGHLANDS looked all the more beautiful to Jimmy after he'd been away. The heather sprawled richly across the moors and filled the air with scent. Jimmy tripped along with all his worries behind him and eventually reached the hill which overlooked Lemmingburgh, his home town and the largest town in the Highlands. He smiled. He thought of the rapturous and heroic homecoming he would receive after his days of wandering the Island; of all the Girl Lemmings who'd hurl themselves at his feet and how famous he'd be throughout the Highlands.

He made his way down the glen and trod the path into Lemmingburgh with vigour. He passed the little hovels that bordered the town and looked around. An old Lemming turned her head momentarily away from pruning her rosebushes and waved at him.

'Halloo there Jimmy boy,' she said.

Jimmy waved back.

'Friendly enough,' thought Jimmy, but not quite what he'd had in mind. He made his way past the cinema and the shops, past the Lemming Baths and

the Town Hall and went home. He was waved at and 'hallooed' at but the biggest welcome he received was at home when his mother prepared a slap-up meal of good honest Scotch Broth and Haggis.

Jimmy asked his mum what everyone was doing.

'Why it's the evacuation dear,' she said. And with that Jimmy ate up his haggis and went to bed.

'The best idea since Shakespeare changed the name of his new novel from Trev & Doreen to Romeo & Juliet!'

The Lemming Times

'Laugh! I nearly did!'

John 'miserable git' McCloud

'A stimulating commentary on post-modern socioeconomical determinants in a neo-anarchist anti-disestablishmentarian rodent community.'

Humphrey the incredible burping frog

'Undoubtly the best story about the 12 Tribes of Lemming Island ever written.'

Bill R. Clinton

'What's this Lemmings then luv?'

Mrs. B. Porridge (Psygnosis cleaner)